
Education Committee

HB 2808

Brief Description: Providing additional opportunities to assist students who have not completed all graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Upthegrove, Quall, Liias, Priest, Green, Conway, Pedersen, Kenney, Hudgins, Santos, Kelley and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to disseminate information and create a training program regarding enhanced counseling that is targeted to students who complete other high school graduation requirements but have not passed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning.
- Provides grants for enhanced counseling, if funds are appropriated.
- Creates grants for High School Plus programs that include enhanced counseling and learning opportunities for targeted students to complete a diploma as well as make progress in a career pathway that leads to a family wage job, if funds are appropriated.

Hearing Date: 1/25/08

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

The graduating class of 2008 will be the first group of students who must meet the state standard on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in addition to meeting other graduation requirements to earn a diploma. The Class of 2008 must meet the standard in the Reading and Writing content areas.

Although there are a number of programs and funding sources intended to provide assistance to struggling students, only three state programs or initiatives are targeted specifically to high school students based on their performance on the WASL:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

1. The Promoting Academic Success (PAS) program provides funds for school districts to offer targeted remediation designed to help students pass the WASL on a retake of the assessment or through an alternative assessment. Currently, funds for the PAS program are expressly for providing services to 11th and 12th grade students.
2. Each school must prepare a Student Learning Plan (SLP) for each student who was not successful on the WASL during the previous school year. The SLP identifies the courses and interventions the school will make available to assist the student. The SLP is shared with parents, preferably at a conference, and updated annually as needed.
3. In 2007, legislation was enacted creating a pilot program and funding mechanism for two community and technical colleges to offer instruction and courses to students who had met all graduation requirements except meeting standard on the WASL, with the aim of having the students earn a diploma. Bates and Renton Technical Colleges were selected for the pilot, but programs have not yet been implemented because students will not qualify until after June of 2008.

Under current law, students who have not yet received a high school diploma are eligible to continue attending public schools until they are 21 years old. School districts report the students as enrolled and they generate state and federal funding allocations. Each year more than 7 percent of 12th grade students continue on to a 13th year. The degree to which school districts provide special programs for 13th year seniors is not clear. Until the class of 2008, the only reasons for students to continue attending high school would be because they had not completed course credits required for graduation or were receiving transitional services in special education.

Summary of Bill:

Enhanced Counseling. Beginning no later than June of 2008, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must collect and disseminate information to high schools and create a training strand at the OSPI Summer Institutes for counselors and mentor teachers regarding the following topics:

- high school and/or GED completion options offered by schools, skill centers, and community and technical colleges;
- skills training and tutoring options offered through community-based organizations;
- workforce education and training options and pathways, especially in occupations that will lead to family wage jobs and are in demand by employers;
- availability of and access to financial aid; and
- need for enhanced counseling targeted to students who complete other high school graduation requirements but have not passed the WASL and are not ready to graduate with their class. Enhanced counseling includes support for high school completion plus assistance with a career pathway that leads to additional education and a family wage job.

If funding is provided, the OSPI allocates funds to school districts and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) to offer enhanced guidance, counseling, and assistance for targeted students. The Legislature's intent is to allocate funding primarily on the basis of numbers of targeted students, with allocations to the ESDs where students are more dispersed. The OSPI must annually report on participation and outcomes from the enhanced counseling.

High School Plus Programs. If funding is provided, the OSPI allocates grants to high schools, skill centers, and ESDs to create High School Plus programs for targeted students. High School Plus programs:

- provide skill instruction needed to pass the WASL and earn a diploma using flexible scheduling such as part-time, on-line, evening, and weekend courses;
- offer assistance with compiling a collection of evidence alternative assessment;
- provide enhanced counseling;
- connect students with additional learning opportunities in courses or programs that will lead to career pathways and/or postsecondary education and training to earn a family wage job. Learning opportunities can be offered directly by the school or skill center or in partnership with community-based organizations and community and technical colleges.

The grants are competitive with a simple application, with funds allocated largely on the number of targeted students. The OSPI must announce the first round of grant recipients no later than June 15, 2008. Grant funds are for start-up costs, program development, and ongoing capacity to operate the program. School districts are also authorized to use funds allocated for students under age 21 who are enrolled for purposes of completing a diploma, any funds provided for enhanced counseling programs, and other available resources.

The OSPI must submit a report by September 15, 2009, on the program design and outcomes of High School Plus programs and recommend a funding mechanism for the program other than competitive grants.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.